

Winter Flooding in California / 01-11-06

Happy New Year! I thought we would begin 2006 by introducing a new feature: regular correspondence from my office on some of the major issues affecting agriculture.

The storms and flooding that hit Northern California at the beginning of the month put a somber edge on an otherwise festive holiday season. We know that California agriculture absorbed some of the damage and is dealing with losses running into the millions of dollars. The good news is that almost all the crops in the flood zone had already been harvested. However, floodwaters can cause damage in other ways.

For example, in Napa County, a levee breach allowed large trees and other debris into some vineyards. Preliminary estimates are that 200 acres may have to be ripped out and replanted. Similar problems with debris, lost fences and trellises and damaged irrigation equipment have been reported from Mendocino, Lake and Sonoma counties.

I had the opportunity to see some of the damage for myself, touring a vineyard near Yountville that was damaged by that levee breach. Here are some photos of flood damage.



Flooded vineyard in Napa County
photos: e. williams/cdfa



Secretary Kawamura inspects the flood damage



Flooded walnut orchard in Sutter County
photo: e. williams/cdfa

We were fortunate to meet with some news media there. Here is a link to the coverage in the Napa Valley Register: http://www.napavalleyregister.com/articles/2006/01/05/news/local/iq_3240917.txt and in the California Farm Bureau's Ag Alert: <http://www.cfbf.com/agalert/AgAlertStory.cfm?ID=506&ck=FF4D5FBBADF976CFDC032E3BDE78DE5>

One of the items we were able to discuss was possible recovery options for agricultural producers suffering damage from the storms. To that end, Larry Plumb of the USDA Farm Service Agency joined me in Yountville and was able to provide additional details about federal programs. One of Governor Schwarzenegger's highest priorities is the thorough leveraging of federal dollars to benefit California. We are fortunate to have a partner like the USDA - able to help in a variety of ways when disaster strikes. Producers interested in more information about USDA programs are asked to call their local FSA office or click on the following web link: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/>

The storms and floods have kicked off what is certain to be an eventful year in Sacramento. Already, we have heard a great state-of-the-state address from Governor Schwarzenegger – where he outlined his Strategic Growth Plan – and we have seen his budget for 2006-2007. There is good news for agriculture. I will have more on that for you the next time.

Thanks for your support, and feel free to contact my office with any comments or concerns.

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